

PRESS STATEMENT

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS AT FILTON COLLEGE

Groups identified as disadvantaged by the Government due to social or economic factors, are known to be at a greater risk of not accessing education or of not completing a course of study. This means that they may become, or remain, economically inactive or they will be more likely to take up low skilled jobs.

All Colleges are responding to the Government's key priorities, which includes these specific disadvantaged groups. Colleges are helping these young people and adults to come off benefits, study, and then progress into employment.

These vulnerable groups are more likely to be in need of learning and financial support on entry to a College and throughout their studies. This is recognised by the Learning and Skills Council and on production of proof of status, additional funding is available to the College to support students in the way the College believes is most relevant.

Course fees for under 19's and some adults are remitted including certain disadvantaged groups. However, at most post-16 education institutions, students are asked to cover some materials costs used during their course. This pays for items which are not fully funded by the Government. This is the situation at Filton College. These materials fees are typically £75 per academic year.

In the cases referred to by Mr Davies, the £50 offered back to students is in fact a partial remittance of the materials fees they paid at the beginning of their course. By offering this small refund, the College is recognising that for this particular group there is a cost to education, which for the more vulnerable in society can be a barrier.

By reducing the costs slightly we have encouraged students to attend their classes and ultimately achieve a qualification which will help them properly contribute to society. For many this is their first real achievement in life.

Filton College contacts all students in December informing them that for certain disadvantaged groups, additional funding is available, and offers a £50 remittance if students provide the College with proof that they belonging to this group. This is done because students are sometimes unaware of the additional support available, and if the College knows of this information it can efficiently target more support services to these students

The College also offers financial support for students outside of this particular “disadvantaged” group on a less prescribed basis and has waived or partially waived materials fees if it is deemed appropriate because of an individual’s particular financial situation.

Mr Davies believes “£50 is not a lot of money” – but to these disadvantaged groups it **IS** a lot of money and we firmly believe that our approach speaks for itself.

Of the 35 disadvantaged students last academic year who were supported by this partial remittance of their materials fees, 96% have re-enrolled with Filton College in 2007/8 or achieved their qualification. This is an outstanding achievement and retention figure.

Over the past four years this scheme has supported 111 students, most of whom (89%) have successfully completed their course and have progressed into further education or have become economically active.

-ENDS-

Notes for editor

The policy was introduced in 2003, and in that period of time there have been the following students who have been supported by the £50 remittance of materials fees at Filton College, whilst in the same period we have enrolled over 70,000 students (over 10,000 full time equivalents).

Disadvantaged Groups	2003/4	2004/5	2005/7	2006/7	Total
Hostel or Residential Care residents	5	4	3	2	14
Students with Mental Health Problems	1	2	6	9	18
Traveller				1	1
Statutory Education Interrupted	3	5	3	3	14
Living in, or recently left care	3	1	2	1	7
Asylum Seeker	1	3	4	2	10
Refugee		5	5	9	19
Ex Offender			2	2	4
Full time carer	2	5	2	4	13
Recovering from Alcohol or Drug Dependency	4	4	1	2	11
	19	29	28	35	111

Filton College also distributes Learner Support Funding of £290,000 (07/08) to over 250 students who are not in the 'disadvantaged' categories, but are on benefits of low income, or from a low income background; and a £10,000 welfare fund for short-term grants to over 100 students in immediate/sudden financial difficulties.

